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Van Woerkom's Committee Discusses Agriculture Industry

Director Dan Wyant and Michigan Farm Bureau list priorities for 2003

LANSING – The Senate Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism Committee, today considered testimony on Michigan's agriculture industry from Department of Agriculture Director Dan Wyant and the Michigan Farm Bureau, Chairman Gerald Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores, announced today.

"Agriculture is the second largest industry and the second largest employer in Michigan," Senator Van Woerkom said. "The committee will work hard to ensure that our farms, 99% of which are family owned and operated through production, have the resources needed to be competitive in the national and global market."

Wyant commented on the five priorities the Department of Agriculture for 2003: food safety and security; environmental stewardship; animal, plant health and protection, viable agriculture development, and consumer protection.

According to department's statistics, small farms creating niche markets are on the rise in Michigan. While traditional family farms are decreasing, agricultural markets including wine and agriculture tourism are increasing.

Michigan Farm Bureau also testified before the committee, commenting on the importance of the state's 52,000 farms covering 10.4 million acres of land.

The committee will meet again on Thursday, February 13, to hear presentations from the Department of Natural Resources and Forestry Industry.